4:Huntingford E-5 (1936-1939) 1951 FL6 Dorobo FL6

The Social Institutions of the Dorobo

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I. Introduction.*

The Dorobo are a hunting people, primitive, shy, and elusive, who live in small groups scattered over the high forest lands of Kenya Colony and parts of northern Tanganyika Territory. They all speak dialects of Nandi, the vocabularies being more or less close to Nandi according to their distance from the Nandi area, and many of their customs and institutions

* This account of the Dorobo is based upon field work done in the Timboni Forest area between May 1938 and November 1939 under a Leverhulme Research Fellowship. A previous visit I had made in 1937 was still remembered, and in 1938 I had little difficulty in renewing my acquaintance with the people, in which I was greatly helped by one Arap Murog, my guide in 1937, whose name is mentioned several times in the following pages. To his tact and knowledge is due any measure of success that I may have achieved.

I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to the Leverhulme organization for making the work possible, and to various people, notably Professor C. G. Seligman (Portrait) and the late Dr. C. G. Seligman, for help and encouragement. I wish also to express my thanks to Messrs. G. A. Cavendish and R. G. Waterman for their kindness to me when I was visiting the Dorobo in the neighbourhood of their farms.

The conditions described in the following pages are those which obtained up to the year 1939.

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become civilized, but there are signs that the Old is being relinquished by the New. Some tribal customs are being discouraged by Government, and a few are falling into disuse. It is of high importance therefore that some attempt should be made to record them before they are relegated to the limbo of the half-forgotten. Because of this, and because nobody seems to have made any real attempt to make such a record, the enquiries, of which the following is the result, have been undertaken.

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Nobody can be more acutely aware than I am of the scrappiness of the information collected; great lacunæ remain to be filled in, and many new lines of enquiry opened up. There is reason to hope, however, that the statements regarding native affairs which appear below are not seriously incorrect, for every practicable attempt has been made to secure the truth.

DA 123 124

The methods of investigation employed are those rightly discouraged by anthropologists; they are, however, the best that could be adopted in the circumstances. Information was obtained either direct or by interpretation, the language used being Kiswahili, for no English or other European tongue, is understood by the natives. During recent years, a number of the Kamasipa folk have picked up an ungrammatical form of Kiswahili from the troops (5/6th King's African Rifles) whose duty it has been, and is, to protect them from Kipsigisian and other raiders. I had two such men in my canvass and an official Kamasipa-Kiswahili interpreter: the latter, an Acholi, proved almost useless for the purpose in view.

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Conversations on matters of anthropological interest took place round the camp fire at night on many odd occasions, and at meetings especially arranged for the purpose. I regard such meetings concerned with the object of extracting information as one of the least efficient ways of obtaining it, if the truth is required; but in the circumstances there seemed no reasonable alternative. Villages were visited, wherever practicable, and information obtained on the spot.

Largess (usually tobacco, sometimes money) was occasionally distributed, irrespective of whether the recipients had supplied information or not.

Every endeavour was made to secure the confidence of the people, and in this matter I was fortunate enough to have made a good start before the enquiries commenced, for I had visited Kamasipa on two previous occasions, once with my wife, at the beginning of 1930 (3 months) before the country was administered, and again by myself in 1930 (3 months).

Circumstances associated with the illness and death of one of my porters led to a disclosure relative to the nature of *Eid*, which would otherwise have been difficult to obtain, and which would probably not have been obtained at all had not my informants become aware of sympathetic understanding by my being the first to suggest the sacrifice to avert the feast of death, and to offer the means of performing it.

DA [126] 22

Anthropometric data were collected wherever practicable. It was found necessary however, to limit them to stature and sitting height and to measurements of stature. In order to obtain the desired data it was found necessary to tie every individual measured.

Kamasipa was entered by an unusual route—one which, so far as I know, had not been previously taken by Europeans. The village of Ngeta, in Lango, was reached by means of motor transport, and marches were made from there to the border of the country and through

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Achalli FK4

part of Achalland to the neighbouring area of Lolwee in Kenyenje. No details will be given of this journey, which proved a difficult one on account of the heavy rains. It may be noted, however, that the administrative boundary between Lango and Acholi was found unrecognizable with the tribal boundary. The line of march after leaving Lolwee is indicated on the accompanying map. From the beginning of the journey to Kidomoni, in December, I was accompanied by Captain F. Ramp, then O.C. Kitgum Garrison, to whom I am deeply indebted. Indeed, but it not been for his ever-willing help, many of the enquiries to which this report relates could not have been undertaken. My best thanks are due to the Paymy Bhaloo, wireless for generous assistance. Further, I wish gratefully to acknowledge much good advice from Professor C. G. Seligmann, Dr. A. C. Haddon, and Mr. James Frazer.

I.—Kenyenje.

The administrative purposes the boundaries of Kenyenje, embracing an area of 1,112 square miles, are defined in the Handbook of Uganda (Second Edition) as follows:—

"Commencing at a point on the boundary between the Uganda and East Africa Protectorates, being the centre of the course of Mount Elgon, the boundary runs in a straight line to the source of the River Kimarchanga (also known as the Kilim or Suck River) which river it follows to its junction with the Kiboko River, which river it follows to its junction with Lake Salisbury; thence in a north-westerly direction to a point on 1° N. Latitude due north of the highest point on Kamalinga mountain. From this point it follows the western boundary of Lolwe District until it meets the southern boundary of Kadadi Province; thence along the southern boundary until it meets the Turkwel District boundary of Kadadi Province; thence in a southerly direction along the Turkwel District boundary until it meets the River Turkwel at Suwa; thence along the Turkwel or Suwa to the source of the Suwa in Mount Elgon; thence a straight line to the point of commencement."

Until about the middle of 1926 Kenyenje was undemarcated, except that part of it generally known as Lolwee, which was treated as part of the Acholi District. Kenyenje is a most elevated plain rising very gently in the vicinity of the mountains which tend to be mainly grouped on the western and northern sides. The eastward rise, towards the Kilo escarpment, is moderately conspicuous. Most of the plain consists of "cotton soil" in and on which are growing scattering trees and of a very primitive culture.[1] (Pl. XVIII, Fig. 1.)

The hills and mountains are all composed of ancient crystalline rocks of various sorts except in the south-west where Tertiary lavas and volcanic soils are conspicuous. Generally speaking the crystalline rocks are of the Gneissoid type.[2] They occur everywhere, but they are not very conspicuous. There are due to a relatively young land plateau except in the Barara hills where they show extensive areas.

The area is drained by a dry sand [illegible] is to be reserved a browning steadily down. There are no permanent streams and, during the dry months, water is obtained from holes [illegible]

[1] The Royal Anthropological Institute is also indebted to the Army Medical Museum for a grant towards the expenses of publication.

[2] The details [illegible] of this area will be dealt with in another publication.

[3] See Geol. Surv. Uganda, 1932.

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE DORobo*

By G. W. B. HUNTINGFORD

I

The Dorobo, who call themselves Okiek, are a [424]
forest-dwelling people scattered over the High-
lands of Kenya and Tanganyika. Twelve groups[1]
are recorded, and it is known that they are all
hunters, and that all speak dialects of Nandi. [1911]
The group which forms the subject of this paper [91]
lives in the North Tinderet Areas to the S. E. of
the Nandi Reserve, at an average altitude of over [1915]
8000 ft., and actually on the equator. In this 361
area there were formerly six inhabited districts,
called Kaiyoi, Kipkoreon, Sororjos, Chepsiro,
Siron, and Mokonjich, while some five or six
miles to the south there lived another group on
Tinderet hill. My investigations have been limited [1-4]
to the first three of these divisions, since Chep-
siro, Siron, and Mokonjich no longer exist, and the
comment on Tinderet Siron a distinct group.

At least fifteen years ago the Dorobo were forbid- [4]5
den by the government to live in the forest reserve, [27]
which comprises the whole of their country, and [1]
those that did so, unless as squatters of the Forest

*The field work on which this paper is based was [1911] ●
carried out between May 1934 and November 1935
under a Leverhulme Research Fellowship, and I
wish to express my gratitude to this organization
for making the work possible.

[1] The actual distribution is: Kenya, 5 groups; Tanga-
nyika, 7 groups. See Lyon, East Anthrop. Soc.,
1935, 1-22, 150 and fig. 2.

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